(ii) Private trade has been permitted to import wheat at zero duty from 9th September 2006. The customs duty was earlier reduced to 5 per cent on June 27, 2006.

(iii) Customs duty on import of pulses was reduced to zero on June 8, 2006 and a ban was imposed on export of pulses with effect from June 27, 2006.

(iv) At the initiative of the Government, National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) executed a contract for import of 49,300 MTs of pulses, of which 48,061 MT, comprising 35,168 of urad and 12,893 MT of moong have been shipped.

(v) Duty on palm group of oils was reduced by 10 percentage points in August, 2006.

As a result of the action taken by the Government, prices of certain varieties of pulses and sugar have declined in different centres over the past few weeks. However, prices of wheat have increased at several centres over the same period.

Increasing procurement of wheat

306. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that major wheat producing countries like Australia, Ukraine, USA and China are going to have heavy short fall in the production of wheat; and

(b) if so, whether Government are planning to ensure early and high levels of procurement so that there would be no need to import wheat in 2006-07?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In order to procure sufficient quantity of wheat to meet the requirements of Targetted Public Distribution System and Welfare Schemes, Minimum Support Price for wheat during the Rabi Marketing

Season 2007-08 has been increased to Rs. 750 per quintal, which is Rs. 100 more compared to Rs. 650/- per quintal announced in RMS 2006-07.

Alternatively, policy options to procure sufficient quantity of wheat for meeting the requirement of TPDS and welfare schemes in the event of market prices being above the MSP has been envisaged.

Offtake of sugar and other food items

†307. DR. PRABHA THAKUR:
SHRI JAI PARKASH AGGARWAL:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the details and quantity of sugar and other food items lying unused in the godowns of the country as on date due to non lifting of these items; and

(b) the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) The State Government or their nominated agencies are responsible to lift allotted quantity of levy sugar, wheat and rice for distribution in the Public Distribution System. If allotted quantities remains unlifted, the same are re-allotted. Hence, the stocks do not remain unused. However, as per available information, the stock position of sugar (including levy sugar), wheat and rice is as under:

Item	Quantity (in lac tons)	As on
Sugar	43.64	30.09.2006
Wheat	64.42	31.10.2006
Rice	59.70	31.10.2006

New Environment Policy

308. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether New National Environment Policy has been adopted by Government;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.